

THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—Cowper.



AMONG THE TOMBS.

THE HEIRESS OF CHEEVELY DALE.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—ZILLAH'S TROUBLES.

It is scarcely kind to leave Zillah so long unnoticed in her solitary dignity. Very dismal she looked and felt as the chaise vanished, and yearnings, stronger and deeper than she had ever felt, for "de ole country" brought the tears into her eyes.

She took refuge in her mistress's room, and tried to find comfort in setting her things in order, and arranging every drawer and slide in the exact state in which she wished to find them on her return. There were no

photographs in those days, but there was a picture of Mrs. Boyce in coloured crayons, taken in her girlhood, when her beautiful golden hair fell profusely over her shoulders, and her soft blue eyes, undimmed by time and trial, beamed with the light of youth and loveliness. It hung in an oval frame over the fireplace, and before it stood Zillah, gazing, and sighing, and wondering how she had so unresistingly allowed her to go away alone.

But sorrow—like all other things—comes to an end; and, by degrees, the grandeur of her position and the trust her lady had reposed in her rose in her memory, and she was somewhat reconciled.

She sallied forth, with the keys in her hand, to see if the household was going on faithfully and discreetly. Her first essay at government was not a happy one. The independence, or rather pride, of the cook, who ruled her fellow-servants, had always made her averse to any show of second-hand authority; she roundly declared that Zillah was merely Mrs. Boyce's maid, and no house-keeper; and that she was not going to be ordered by a black woman, who, for anything she knew, had been a slave, and worn chains, and been flogged. Every rebel leader gets followers, however unreasonable his declamations or unprofitable his service; accordingly cook—Misse Cook, as Zillah styled her—carried the kitchen functionaries as staunch adherents. A more favourable opportunity than the present for showing her their feelings could not be hoped for; so, when Zillah descended to take a survey and express her opinions and wishes, she met with sneers and snaps that much discomfited her. To suspect that they could intend contempt or disrespect towards her was not in her nature till she was forced to see it; and greatly perplexed was she, in her simplicity, to find that she had fallen from all dignity, now that she was invested with the highest.

"What dey 'bout? What dey do so for? Why dey no like me? no care for me? Why dey laugh?" she asked herself, as she turned from one to another, getting more puzzled as her discoveries enlarged.

"Berry good; *dey not hab de keys!*" she said to herself, returning to her mistress's room.

This was consoling—they might soon want stores; she hoped they would; and if they didn't humble themselves, and come to her for them, shouldn't they go without? Ay, that they should! Not that she was revengeful, but she had a strong sense of justice, and the administration of due punishment was satisfactory to her; perhaps not least so when it was due on her own behalf. The day was wearing; she grew tired of solitude; as to attempting to consort with them in their present state of mind, it was not to be thought of. No; she would show her royal displeasure, and keep them at a distance; and when Ma'am Boyce came back—she showed all her white teeth at the very thought!

But Ma'am Boyce would not return for some days, perhaps, and the interval must be provided for; and *ennui* was not pleasant, and Zillah knew she should be devoured by it if she continued to sit dumb and mum in the house. What, then, could she do? Suddenly she bethought her of Nancy. Had she not been charged to see to her reading, and that before witnesses who might have been more impressed thereby with reverence than their "ingrance," to which she put down their behaviour, allowed them to be?

Adjusting her dress, and taking the largest book on the table (which was a large book of Common Prayer, bound in red) in her hands, she walked majestically into the kitchen. "You see, Misse Cook, Ma'am Boyce, your lady, tell me to make read Misse Carey. Me go now; dis my book."

Cook muttered something, with a half-laugh, about her having liberty to go where she pleased, which Zillah thought it wiser not to notice, as she had no strong arm to appeal to for the enforcing of reverence; and she departed for Nancy's hut.

She was so much ruffled by her own little turmoils and troubles that she never once during her walk recollected the state in which Nancy had been left by the funeral, nor the unpromising condition in which she might expect to find her. Arriving at the cottage, her thoughts got into a new channel. She knocked somewhat timidly, and received no answer; then peeped

through the window. No one was there. Evidently the bed was as the corpse had left it; there were no traces of fire, except ashes trodden about the floor; and a more dismal scene, connecting it with all that had occurred, could not have presented itself.

"Oh, poor Misse Carey!" said Zillah, shocked, but on the whole relieved by finding her scholar absent; "she go about and cry, poor Misse Nancy!"

Mrs. Boyce, she well knew, if she were there, would not have rested satisfied until she had found her; the rocks and lakes, the houses—Big and Little Balla—she would have searched, and not have ceased till she had succeeded. But Zillah, though she had every desire to imitate her dear lady to the limits of possibility, could not search for two reasons. First, the rebellion of the household made it certain that no scouts would be at her command; and second, she, in her heart, had no wish to find Nancy. She argued that, if people wouldn't keep in their proper place to be done good to, they had no right to look for it; and even now, when her heart was brimming over with love to her dear mistress, and ardent longings for her return, she could not help charging her with being "berry too good," and doing "berry too mush."

"Well, Misse Carey no at home; berry good, take back de book," she said, turning away. But she didn't like the thought of the house; there were yet two hours of daylight; to pass them in solitary confinement was too much for her sociable spirit. She remembered the rectory. Mr. Goldison was out; "Misse Slippy" was no great favourite of hers, but she was a housekeeper, and a chat with her would be a relief, and she would, like herself, be at liberty to pass an hour at her ease.

The walk from Little Balla, where Nancy's hut was, to the rectory, was not more than a mile, and a bright October afternoon made it no unpleasant scheme. Zillah went forwards with alacrity.

To arrive at the rectory it was necessary to pass through the churchyard. Zillah had no fancy for churchyards, but this could not be avoided; besides, it was daylight, and sunny daylight too. She had not gone half-way through the side walk which led to the rectory when she saw, on a newly-made grave, a heap of clothing, for so it looked.

"Oh, dear! dat Misse Carey's hat; and dat—oh, dear! dat Misse Carey's coat!" she exclaimed.

Her eyes rolled with apprehension. She feared to go on, and—lost the clothes, and whatever might be in them, might come after her—she feared to go back.

"Oh, dear! dat Misse Carey! see her man-boot," she cried, in a suppressed voice, as she discovered Nancy's foot coming from under the shapeless heap.

What she would ultimately have done, if help in the shape of a man (who, at any other time, would have been no pleasant companion to her, in a lonely place) had not suddenly come forward, as if from the rectory, cannot be conjectured. His face was well-nigh as dark as her own, and the scowl on his brow at any other time would have alarmed her; but the supernatural was always the master terror with her.

"Tink, sar, dat Misse Carey! tink her chile bury dere," she gasped out.

The man went forward at once, and, taking the arm of the unresisting figure, lifted it up and disclosed the face of Nancy indeed, livid and drawn as if in the agonies of death.

"Oh, dear! she not dead?" cried Zillah: "poor Misse Carey! Oh, Ma'am Boyce be so sorry."

"She's not dead, but not far from it by the looks of her," said the man, taking a flask from his pocket and

pouring some of its contents into the mouth. "Here, missis, come you and hold her up, while I go to the parson's and tell the housekeeper to bring what's fitter for her than this."

"Oh, nebber, nebber!" cried Zillah, shuddering at the idea of standing on a grave—one so freshly made—with which she had such unpleasant associations.

"Come!" cried the man; but as he spoke Nancy opened her eyes and looked in his face.

"She's a-coming to, poor thing! What's the good of your fretting so?" he cried. "Take another taste; there. It's good of the sort, but hot stuff; what the women could make for you, would be best. Holloa! Nancy, look up," he exclaimed, seeing the heavy eyes about to close again. "Here, you missis, run to the parson's, and I'll hold her, and tell 'um the poor thing has been here all night, and never ate a bit, I'll be bound, since the funeral; it's starved she is."

Zillah was satisfied with this commission, and, though she didn't admire the unceremonious way in which it was imposed on her, went at once to execute it.

Now it so happened that Mrs. Slipley had a special engagement, which she was on the way to fulfil when she met Zillah at the rectory gate.

"Oh, Missce Slippy; how you do, ma'am? Poor Missce Carey all berry bad—in *dat place dare*" (pointing to the churchyard). "You give something to make alive for her, poor ting!"

Zillah said all this panting for breath, and looking much discomposed. Mrs. Slipley had had little communication with her since she had been at the Rocky Heights, except when they had met at church on Sunday, and could scarcely take in the purport of her words, through surprise at the vehemence of her manner. When she did comprehend, she signified her intention of going to see what would be the most promising "make alive" article to bestow.

On their returning to the grave, they found poor Nancy sitting on the turf, her appearance a little less death-like. No one was with her, and Zillah was equally amazed at the evanishment of the friendly but ill-favoured man, and at Mrs. Slipley's indifference to the fact.

"Oh, dear! where him go? Missce Caree, you better now? Oh! she look like——" The image of Nanny came vividly before her, and she could not finish her speech.

Mrs. Slipley, who seemed more troubled at the interruption to her plans than at anything else, spoke somewhat roughly to the unhappy woman. "Come, Nancy, what's the good of taking on so? You've had a taste of rum, that will help you on. Come now, be alive, move up. You shall come to the house and have something; it's food that you want; and afterwards this lady will take you home, I dare say."

Mrs. Slipley counted the value of her words as she spoke. She was alone at the rectory, having special good reasons for giving a general holiday to all but herself. She had no one, therefore, to send home with Nancy, of whom, with Zillah, she wanted to get rid as soon as possible. How could she better dispose of both than by her proposed plan? and how so happily secure the execution of that plan as by using that honeyed title? Certainly it was a title that made a sort of rippling smile pass over Zillah's ample face. Didn't it reach to the very centre of her heart, and make a titillation there indescribable?

"Oh, yes, Missce Slippy, I'se take her home," she hastily responded, and held out an arm for Nancy's support.

The flask had more than revived her. She was unused to such stimulants, and it had acted as a powerfully exhilarating medicine on the exhausted sufferer, who arose, tottering indeed, and looking as if little conscious of things around her.

"Tink she tumble, ma'am?" asked Zillah, with some apprehension. "Look, Nancy, Missce Carey, dere your hat; put 'um on. Come, now we go Massa Golyson. Oh, nebber mind—him not dere" (seeing an inclination in her to turn away). "Now, ma'am, you better take Missce Carey arm. I'se go 'long 'fore you; dis place not 'nuff for all togeder."

By which skilful diplomacy she eluded the trial of contact with Nancy, which, fresh from the grave, and still in the churchyard, was highly repugnant to her feelings.

The housekeeper understood her mind, and, in order to dispel any inconvenient amount of superstition which might interfere with her own arrangements, took very kindly to Nancy, giving her the full support of her arm, and assuring her she would be another woman to-morrow. A short rest at the rectory by a cheerful fire, a comfortable meal partaken of with indifference, but evidently useful in its effects, brought back something of Nancy's natural looks.

"She's brave now," said the housekeeper, looking at the great clock by the door; "and," with a significant wink to Zillah, "it's drawing to dusk hour; maybe daylight would be best to walk home in."

Zillah's heart failed her at the thought of a daylight walk; but one in the dusk!

"Tink Missce Carey not walk to-day, ma'am," she said in a flustered, thick voice. "You gib her to sleep here; I'se come to fetch home to-morrow."

"Not walk! why, I'm bound she'll beat either of us—won't you, Nancy? Don't you know I want a good basket of fish? I must have some for pickling, and you know I'm bound to get an eel-pie for the master, and he may be home to-morrow, or any day; so you'll be stirring, won't you, Nancy? And here—here's a little bottle for you; take a drop when the fit comes over you, and you'll overet it in no time; it's the same you had to-day."

So saying, she put a small flask in Nancy's hand.

Zillah's face looked so intensely miserable, so frightened, and so uncomplying, that the housekeeper saw she must go a step further if she meant to clear the premises of her guests; so she started up, saying,

"Now, then; I'll go with you as far as the high road to Balla, and it's nothing from there, you know."

This was effectual, and Zillah was quite impatient to be gone. The churchyard being provided for, she had no solicitude but for the dusk hour.

Nancy seemed regardless of all said and done; she sat with her eyes on the fire; now and then a strong shudder convulsed her, when Zillah would lift up her hands and roll her eyes; but she made no resistance, and rose, though with a little difficulty, when the housekeeper declared it was time to start.

"Ah, stiff a bit, and no wonder; nothing like a walk to take that off. Now, Nancy, this lady will see you safe after I leave you."

But the charm was powerless now, wholly negatived by the price to be paid for it; once more Zillah heartily wished herself back in "de ole country." With very little help from the housekeeper, Nancy walked at a fair pace till they had reached the point of separation. Mrs. Slipley, by making a circuit, had avoided the churchyard, not from any dread on her own part, but lest Nancy should refuse to pass the grave.

This arrangement was highly satisfactory to Zillah,

who had marched on in front, wondering if it would be impossible to get the housekeeper's company to the end of the walk; but hope died when, with a cheerful "Good day; don't forget the fish, Nancy," Mrs. Slipley, with somewhat of a malicious laugh, turned off at the Balla road, and left Nancy standing looking vacantly at the sea.

Poor Zillah! she watched the receding figure of the treacherous housekeeper, as she disappeared behind the headland; should she also desert? The thought came, and was banished, and came again.

But fear of displeasing her mistress prevailed. What if Nancy should throw herself into the sea, or go back to the churchyard? So, summoning up all her fortitude, she said encouragingly, while her lips quivered,

"Now, Missee Carey, you come home."

Nancy turned her leaden eyes upon her in silence.

"Oh, dear! what I'se do?" ejaculated Zillah, getting into despair. "Come now; it be all night soon. Why you not come?"

Nancy, without replying, walked towards her.

"Oh! berry good, you walk yourself? Dat berry good, Missee Carey; I'se go 'fore, you come."

But it was evident that Nancy had no intention to go in the direction of the hut, for when Zillah moved in that line she remained fixed as a statue.

"Why you no come?" asked Zillah, almost crying.

"Den I'se go home, and go yourself," she exclaimed, in a pet, determined to run no further risk of the dusk hour, which was indeed rapidly approaching. "I'se tell Ma'am Boyce you so berry 'terminated. Good-bye, Missee Carey; I'se go home!"

She made this last assertion with vigour, and, wrapping her shawl round her, went off on the way to the Rocky Heights, leaving Nancy unmoved, and, as it seemed, immovable. With bitter complaints against England, in which nothing had ever been seen or found in her experience but trouble, she hastened on. Counting up the grudges she had against it, from poor Massa Goly's loss to her mistress's cruel desertion of her, she got into such a state of excitement that she was forced to slacken her pace and pause for breath.

Before making a fresh start she turned round, for Nancy's road to her hut over the cliff was still visible, and she wanted to see if she had made any advance on it. To her amazement, almost horror, she was close behind her. For a moment she was speechless; but, when she found words, she began exhorting her to go home. Nancy was not alive to words, however. She stood quiet while they lasted, but took step for step with Zillah when she went forward again.

The sight of the house, which now came in view, revived Zillah's spirits and courage; and, with their increase, her charity expanded. It struck her that Nancy meant to take up her abode for the night at the Heights; and this was by no means objectionable, in some respects the reverse. In the company of so many, much of the dread she had of her would lose its power; and, in the present state of things, it might not be amiss for her to have a leaven of faithfulness in the rebellious society awaiting her; and perhaps, when Nancy was fairly housed and refreshed, she might find her tongue, and prove a better companion than she had reason to hope for in the servants. At any rate, she could use her as a sort of diversion of their thoughts. They would be kept in awe by her pertinacious clinging to the dead.

"You come here? Berry good. I'se let you come," she said, pompously, when she had concluded her deliberations; and she announced with dignity to the servants,

who came in wonder round to see her return with such a companion, "I'se bring Missee Carey to sleep here to-night. Poor Missee Carey! Find her on de grave—all stretched out—berry bad!" she said aside to the cook.

Nancy leaned against the open door, as if wholly unconcerned at the scrutiny she was the object of, the remarks made, or the questions asked about her. One declared she looked as good as dead; the kitchen-maid warranted her to be worse than any ghost; and Zillah's history of her unearthly, unnatural churchyard predilections, and her own wonderful courage in taking her from the very grave, and walking back with her, all alone, over the cliff, accompanied with her usual lively gestures, made as strong an impression as she could have hoped.

"Come in, Missee Carey. What, sure you no afraid of her?" she asked, proud of the courage she had so suddenly acquired, and the superiority it gave her. "Oh, dear, poor Nancy nebber hurt nobody. Come, Missee Nancy, I'se take you to my room and gib you some tea."

And, with the gracious air of her mistress, whom she wished to personate, and whom she insensibly imitated, she took her passive hand and led her up-stairs, quite charmed at the silent admiration of the gazers in the hall.

THE FAMILIAR NATURAL HISTORY OF INDIA.

BY AN OLD QUI-MYH.

II.—STREET BIRDS: KITES AND BRAHMINI KITES.

NEXT in abundance to the common Indian crow, the kites of the country will perhaps even more surprise the stranger from Western Europe; the novelty consisting more especially in the fact of a bird of prey—or what he would be apt to consider as such—existing in such prodigious numbers. The fact is, that kites have become so rare in the British Islands, from the relentless persecution of them by gamekeepers and others for a long series of generations, that the habits and nature of the birds composing the genus *Milvus* have been forgotten amongst us. But were the British kite (*M. iccinus*) as numerous in England now as it was during the time of the Tudor dynasty, the scavenger kites of India (*M. go-vinda*) might help to remind the British exile in that land of his distant home in the west. "In the days of King Henry VIII," writes Pennant, "as appears from the observation of the celebrated Clusius (L'Ecluse), the British metropolis itself swarmed with kites, which were attracted by the various kind of offal thrown into the streets, and were so fearless as to take their prey in the midst of the greatest crowds, it being forbidden to kill them." Upon which passage the naturalist Shaw remarks, in 1809, that "the descent of a kite at the present day, in Cheapside or Charing Cross, would probably attract as sudden a crowd as any other unexpected phenomenon, and would doubtless be recorded in the public prints as an event of singular curiosity." Curiously enough, this was verified just half a century afterwards. In the "Zoologist" for 1859, we read that "A large kite, with very long wings and a forked tail, was seen flying at the height of about a hundred yards above Piccadilly (opposite the Green Park). As the bird sailed slowly, it might easily have been shot. Its appearance excited a good deal of attention among the passengers in Piccadilly." How well can the description by L'Ecluse, however, be recognised at the present day in India, where the kite proper to the country is so very numerous in its season, about human habitations, hundreds of them circling

in the air together, especially towards evening, all collected over one spot, though there is no refuse to entice them thither; or, if some garbage be thrown out, their dexterity in clutching whatever they can seize, without alighting, affords a curious, however frequent, spectacle. A few will commonly alight and mingle among their fellow-scavengers the crows, while a crowd of others are circling and dashing overhead, and stooping as they sweep by.

Mr. Knapp, in his "Journal of a Naturalist," relates an instance of as many as eleven kites having been captured in Gloucestershire upon one tree, with their feet frozen to the branches; and the latter curious fact was less surprising to the late accomplished naturalist Professor Macgillivray than the circumstance of so many individuals of a bird of prey being found together. Why, the birds of this genus are eminently social, if not gregarious, wherever existing in sufficient numbers, and not persecuted; and, moreover, they are predatory only to a very moderate extent. How often, in India, may an old tree be seen covered with them, or a number together upon a housetop, preening and sunning themselves, while others are sailing about above them! And so with the British kite where sufficiently numerous. In a list of the birds observed to winter in Macedonia, Colonel Drummond remarks of it, "Most numerous, and seem fond of society. Upwards of fifty of these birds were seen one evening, about sunset, sitting upon one tree"—a sight of the most ordinary occurrence in India, in the instance of the species proper to that country.

The Indian kite is far from being so handsome a bird as that which was formerly common here. It is smaller, with a less deeply forked tail, being nearly akin to the "black kite" of Eastern Europe, Arabia, and North Africa (*M. migrans*). Its plumage is of a dark dingy brown colour, the cere and legs very pale wax yellow, and the eye dark. The young have a pretty speckled appearance when their plumage is new, a contrasting pale spot tipping each feather of their upper parts, and there is a pale median stripe on each feather of their lower parts. They vary a good deal in size, the females being larger than the males, as in other *Falconidae*.

The Indian kite breeds early in the year, making its nest generally on the ledges of large buildings. At this time it is exceedingly noisy, uttering frequently its shrill tremulous squeal, whence its native name of *chil* (or *cheel*). Most Indian names of animals derive from the voice, like our words *cuckoo*, *peewit*, *kittynake*, in this country, or *miaou* in Chinese, for a cat. The common Indian crow is *cagh* in Bengali; *kowá* in Hindustani; both names representing frequent utterances of the bird, the former being its ordinary caw. When the young kites are hatched, the parent bird will often make a sudden stoop at intruders who pass near the nest, taking them always unawares, and sometimes inflicting a smart rap on the head, as we can testify from repeated personal experience. This also has been remarked of the British kite; and there is a story of one in Ireland which thus carried off an old gentleman's wig, in which its talons had chanced to hitch, and which it deposited on the top of one of the highest trees in the neighbourhood. The writer has also experienced a tolerably smart flip in the ear from the shoulder of the wing of a kite while walking through a crowded provision-bazaar. In Calcutta the kites disappear in the rainy season, and return with the cold weather, when they breed: one or two may perhaps remain, hankering about the provision-bazaar; but the great mass of them have taken their departure at the season when the adjutants have re-assembled. "Hurrah!" said a friend of ours, when we

were at Akyáb, on the Burmese side of the Bay of Bengal; "I have seen some kites this morning; we shall now have the cold weather," as the temperature of an English summer is termed, comparatively, in those latitudes.

The kites and the crows live amicably enough together, for the most part, and may be commonly seen feeding from the same mass of refuse; but on the wing it is not unusual to see a crow attack and pursue a kite for a considerable distance, attacking it repeatedly, as often as it is able. The poet Milton, it may be remembered, considered that the combats of the petty monarchs of the Saxon heptarchy were about as worthy of historic record as "the combats of kites and crows;" a comparison which would hardly have occurred to him at the present time in England. We have seen a kite endeavour to rob an osprey of its captured fish, attacking it again and again, till both passed out of view. The British osprey is one of four kinds of fishing eagles which are common in Lower Bengal.

Let any one stand at a window of a house in Calcutta, and make movements of the arm as if throwing something away; and it is astonishing how soon the crows and kites will assemble around, whisking about on the wing in eager expectation. But the kites are notorious for boldly snatching, even out of people's hands, though always cleverly taking them unawares, and often to the amusing confusion of their dupes, who gaze at the treasure borne aloft, where perhaps two or three kites are already screamingly fighting for the possession of it. Thus, too, they pounce upon the viands which are being conveyed from the cooking-room to the house; or a crow may be seen perched on a cooly's basket, as he carries it on his head, and making deliberate selection of its contents. The latter may not be an every-day scene, but it is witnessed commonly enough. A meal *à fresco*, at a picnic, for instance, has need to be vigilantly guarded from such marauders. These kites very rarely attack living creatures of any kind, and are scarcely so dangerous to young chicken as the crows are. They feed on vegetable as well as animal refuse, though the latter by preference, and undoubtedly are of great service as scavengers.

The fact of kites and other reputed birds of prey subsisting more or less on vegetable substances is by no means generally known, even to naturalists. Of the two European species of kite, Captain Watkins, in a paper on the ornithology of Andalusia ("Zoologist," 1856), states that he then possessed, alive, a common kite (*Milvus icinus*), and a black kite (*M. migrans*). "These birds, in their present domestic state, have a great penchant for vegetables and fruits. I have watched them often," he tells us, "in my kitchen garden, plucking the pods of peas, and eating the contents; a bed of radishes also (which I was at a loss to perceive what had demolished) I one morning found occupied by my two pets, eagerly devouring them; they could not have been driven to it by hunger, as they were well supplied with birds and young rabbits. Since the figs and peaches have been ripe, they have indulged most freely in their taste for fruit, nothing pleasing them better than a ripe fig." Most assuredly the Indian kites are innocent of any depredation on the produce of the garden.

Mr. C. J. Andersson, in his interesting work entitled "Lake Ngami," notices the curious fact of a vulturine bird (*Neophron percnopterus*) resorting to vegetable aliment. In the desert sandy region extending southward from Walfish Bay,* along the western coast of South

* *Wal-fesch*, i.e., "whale-fish," now often written *Waleich*. These changes and corruptions of names are sometimes amusing. The town of Belize, in Central America, derives from "Wallis," the patronymic of its founder.

Africa, "a kind of prickly gourd (called by the natives *naras*), of the most delicious flavour," occurs in great abundance. "In this barren and poverty-stricken country, food is so scarce that, without the '*naras*,' the land would be all but uninhabitable. It is not man alone that derives benefit from this remarkable plant; for every quadruped, from the field-mouse to the ox, and even the feline [1] and the canine races, devour it with great avidity. Birds are also very partial to it, more especially ostriches, which, during the '*naras*' season, are found in great abundance in these parts. I have seen the white Egyptian vulture feed upon it." In the "Annals and Magazine of Natural History" for 1843, the curious fact is recorded of the jaguar (*Felis onca*) striking down and devouring the nests of a honey-producing wasp of South America. But we must return to our proper subject.

The Brâhmini kite (*Haliastur indus*) is another common and familiar bird throughout India, wherever there is water, though much less so than the brown or pariah kite already described. It is a handsome species, with a comparatively short and square tail, instead of a long and forked tail; the plumage of maturity is bright cinnamon-red, with white neck and under-parts, all of the white feathers having a narrow black median stripe, which distinguishes this race from a corresponding one in Australia and its vicinity, while that of Siam and Java is intermediate. The colour of the beak is pale yellow, and of the legs bright yellow. The young are brown and speckled, as in other or fork-tailed species, and its second plumage is intermediate. This bird is the "Pondicherry Eagle" of the early naturalists, and has much the appearance of a diminutive "erne" or sea-eagle, but with proportionally weaker and more kite-like feet. Its cry is a very peculiar sort of bleat.

The Brâhmini kite keeps chiefly to the vicinity of water, and both this and the other perch commonly about the rigging of ships, watching for what they can pick up from the surface of the water. On the wing it is conspicuously distinguished by its bright colouring when adult, and the young by the shape of the tail. We remember being at Budge-budge, on the banks of the Hooghly, some miles below Calcutta, where the moat surrounding the old fort there was being dragged with fishing-nets, and the assemblage of these Brâhmini kites was something marvellous to behold. It appeared as if the branches of the trees would give way with the weight of them; but this species is not often observed in such numbers. It is a degree more predatory than the other or pariah kite, and it is apt to pounce on a wounded snipe or teal, following the sportsman with that object, the quarry not unfrequently being recovered at the expense of the depredator. Though seen occasionally about town, the Brâhmini kite does not seek its food, like the other, in the crowded streets; but it is sufficiently abundant and familiar to be here noticed.

A well-known Anglo-Indian author, Dr. George Baist, gives the following highly graphic sketch of a curious ornithological incident, which is observed annually in the Island of Bombay:—"Two events strike with surprise the ornithologist, on the approach of the monsoon. Nearly all the kites, hawks, vultures, and other carrion birds disappear from the sea-coast, while the crows begin to build their nests and hatch their young just at the season that seems most unsuitable for incubation, when the eggs are often shaken out, or the nests themselves are destroyed by the storms, and the poor birds are exposed, in the performance of their parental duties, to all the violence and inclemency of rain and tempest. At the instigation of a sure and unerring instinct, the carnivorous birds, as the rains approach, withdraw

themselves from a climate unsuitable to the habits of their young, betaking themselves to the comparatively dry air of the Dukhun (Deccan), where they nestle and bring forth in comfort, and find food and shelter for their little ones. . . . The scenes connected with this, which follow the conclusion of the rains, are curious enough. While the Mahomedans bury, and the Hindus burn their dead, the Parsees expose their dead in large cylindrical roofless structures, called Towers of Silence, where birds of prey at all times find an abundant repast. Their family cares and anxieties over for the season, the carrion birds, which had left in May for the Dukhun, return in October to Bombay, and make at once for the usual scene of their festivities, now stored with a three months' supply of untasted food. As they appear in clouds approaching from the mainland, the crows, unwilling that their dominions should be invaded, hasten in flocks to meet them, and a battle ensues in the air, long, fierce, and noisy; the fluttering of the wings, the screaming and cawing of the combatants, resounding over the island, till the larger birds succeed, and, having gained the victory, are suffered thenceforth to live in peace." In Bengal, the kites and Brâhmini kites, and also the vultures, breed chiefly in January and February; and the first only disappear, as we have stated, during the rainy season.

THE SONG OF THE CROCUS.

WHAT care I for the snow?
What care I for the frost?
I quietly wait till they go,
Then make up for what I have lost.
I put on my purple cloak,
Or my golden mantle gay,
And, while scarce a flower has awoken,
Come out on the first fine day.

Aconite's sickly hue,
Hepatica's leafless bloom,
These come creeping, too,
Out of their wintry tomb;
Snowdrop her pretty head
Hangs with a timid grace,
As if she came forth in dread
Of getting a frost-bitten face.

They may shiver and fear!
They may look pale and wan!
I say to myself, "I'm here,
And winter for me has gone;
I'll blossom as long as I may,
And shine like gold in the light
That kindly comes in my day,
Nor trouble my head about night."

"Ha, ha!" I say to the sun,
Staring him full in the face,
"Isn't it capital fun
That I've come back to my place?
Shine on and keep me, pray!
And while I stay I'll bring
My mantle of gold so gay,
Then put it away till next spring."

E. A. F.

ON THE NILE.

CHAPTER VIII.—PALM-REST AT EVENING—NEW YEAR ON THE NILE.

"They shall drink at noon
The palm's rich nectar—shall lie down at eve
In the sweet pastures of remembered days,
And wake to wander and to weep no more."

THE music and the great heats of noon were alike over. Sowadee was still two miles up the stream, and the wind had fallen. We were obliged to track.

"Wallah!" muttered the reis, shaking himself up from a doze, "there is no wind;" and he glanced aloft at the great lateen sail flapping idly on its long yard;

then took a survey forward—the faint breath that came languidly up the river scarcely stirred the plummy palms along its shore; backward—there, down the stream, sundry other white-winged craft, merchant cangias and the like, paralysed in the same lull wherein we were becalmed, were folding in sail and making for shore.

No encouragement could our reis find in any quarter, so "Yallough!" he shouted, lifting up an arm, "take in sail and track!" Whereupon our Arabs, issuing from their lurking-places, yawned, put aside their pipes, and girded up their loins for action. Four went, hand over hand, up the mast, and got astride of the long yard, where, with arms and feet working monkey-fashion in concert, they grappled with the broad sail, and took it in by puckers. The boat being then near the western bank, we punted it ashore, and the rest leaped out and began tracking. When the wind falls, your only way of getting on is either to punt the boat, where the river is shallow enough, or track along the bank, barge fashion. You cannot row against the stream. The oars are reserved for the downward journey. Tracking is slow work; but, as we intended mooring at Sowadee, this was our only chance. We could see the place plainly enough across the waters. There were its low mud walls, in a wooded reach, glistening in the afternoon sun; a mosque and a fretted minaret peeping above the trees; a cluster of small tower-like dwellings, low on the bank, embedded in thick masses of green, trembling and inverted in the sparkling tide which flowed at its feet. Such was Sowadee. The great rocks of Kom Achmar bent over the river farther on, but the desert mountain chain, here very close, rose up loftily behind the grove of palms outlying the village—a fantastic background to the picture.

It was a dreamy afternoon, slumbrous with summer airs. We lay on deck watching our bare-legged boatmen plodding along the unequal bank, towing at a rope. Each man had knotted to it a loop of his own, which he slung over his shoulders. It was not fast travelling; your Arabs are averse to any violent work. The rope was often slack. They filed along the shelving shore, amid narrow terraces of flowering lupins and rich patches of crimson opium poppy and wheat—terraces fertilized by the summer inundation. Overhead mimosaes grew, and date-trees crowned the higher bank. "Haylee-omm-Sowar—Haylee-omm-Sowar!" that was the refrain, a sort of litany, a slow march, regulated by Abdallah, the fogleman. The whole proceeding, indeed, made an exact counterpart of a picture we afterwards saw on the walls of a royal sepulchre at Thebes. Pharaoh's artist had there depicted a sumptuous pleasure-boat, at which twelve men were tracking in this identical way, loops and all. Said caught at it in an instant. "Look, sar!" said he, in high glee, holding a light to the wall of the tomb, "men track dahabeeyah! There Abdallah—there Selim—there Hali!"—and he put his finger, child-fashion, upon each of these painted men in turns.

For more than an hour, the tide lapping feebly at our prow, we thus quietly glided on. Flowering bean-fields flung their fragrance over the stream, and palm shadows fell across us, alternated on deck with gaps of golden sunshine.

"Do you know," said I to Smith, "that this is winter?" for he lay, with his hat over his eyes, dozing in an undress much more easy than elegant.

"Eh? What, old fellow? Winter? There's no winter here!"

From a little straggling village sheltered in a copse of dates at our side, a number of small rustics, utterly unclad, looked down upon us from the edge of

the bank as we floated along. They followed, calling "Backsheesh! backsheesh!" and some of the dusky piccaninnies were too young to manage the *h* in that hideous word. Such, however, were none the less energetic in their way; for they toddled in the fore rank lisping "*Backsees! backsees!*" and thrusting out their little fists in eagerness. Fellah women, too, under the trees, lounged on an elbow and looked up from toying with their babes to take a lazy survey of the passing boat.

Now a sheltering palm-grove ran far along the bank. Deye-cots—square towers of mud, honey-combed with earthen jars, and studded thick with perches, where doves and pigeons, who live in the trees by day, settle at night in thousands—were there. We passed a droning *sakia* or two. A blinded buffalo plodding round a worn path in chequered shade; a rustic wheel, clogged and creaky; an endless and dripping string of earthen vessels, splashing out their crystal gatherings into one leaky and common pool; a moss-clad shaft sprinkled by an unceasing rain; and a little babbling rillet of pure water flowing off on a bounteous errand "mid sunny spots of greenery" to freshen the thirsty soil—such is the *sakia*. We passed a shadoof or two—primitive water-lifts, the long pole and bucket of skin—where a group of animated bronze statues (so fancy might have feigned them) in the guise of Ethiopians were toiling at their buckets, and whiling away the sunny hours with a song. Then we came to a shady spot where the white dome of a sheik's sepulchre showed above the bank. It was guarded by an overshadowing sycamore, itself an intruder among the palms of the grove. This was a sacred enclosure; and the mud divans built around the sycamore's sinuous roots afforded rest to the solemn old sheiks of the village. Here, evidently, was the haunt of the village gossips—a kind of market-place where women giggled and chatted, and naked children played and piped, and tumbled about in hopeless confusion.

Thus we glided on as through the scenery of a dream—without effort, peaceably, silently. Silently, for nature in its happiest moods has a silence of its own, at the same time articulate and musical. There is a silence made up of all the stray notes in the broad landscape—the song of birds, the murmurous hum of summer insects, the distant lowing of oxen, the rippling of the stream—a kind of invisible harmony, if you will, like those deep organ-notes you seem to feel rather than hear.

For more than an hour we tracked along the shore, the shadows lengthening over us. Across the water, that broad, wooded bank of green was still flooded in gold. But the blaze of colouring on the purple cliffs behind had already begun to deepen in the deepening light. The sun was slanting to the west. Already arrowy flights of birds, in undulatory and straggling clouds, at times almost spanning the sky, were passing homewards. Lanky cranes, too, and spoonbills, congregated in groups on the sand-banks, which here and there cropped up in mid-stream, were holding solemn conclave as to what should be done for the night. And on the distant cliff eagles and cormorants, tired of planing in mid-air, perched solitary on salient crags and peaks, each near his eyrie.

In these regions twilight is brief, the battle between day and night sharp and decisive. A precipitate descent of the big rounded sun amid a vortex of crimson mists in the Lybian desert; ten minutes of gorgeous afterglow girdling the horizon with zones of colour—rosy at first, and changing from shade to shade like the cheek of Iris—an interregnum of pale green light,

delicate as the chrysoprasus, wherein that line of tropic foliage fringing the glassy river stands spectral ere it fades away and is lost—and then starry night lords it over all.

to a wedding. It happened thus: there was a posse of young urchins hovering near who caught his notice. They watched the approach of the boat with big, eager eyes, and were in the act of shaping their mouths to



EXAMINING A MUMMY.

We tracked rather higher than Sowadee, in order to steer an oblique course across the stream; so, by punting across the shallows and rowing over the current, to drop cleverly down on our moorings.

If any one enjoyed himself at these times it was Saïd. Saïd flattered himself that the troubles of life were now over, for good and all. This journey was slowly opening to his view a vista of unfathomable delights. He already resented the being called "donkey boy."

"No, indeed; he was the effendi's servant."

"You will have to buy back your donkey, Saïd, when we return."

"No, sare!" the boy would reply. "Me be dragoman then; go to Catarak with gentleman. Plenty piastre!"

Thus at every halt he made a point of giving himself airs with the villagers, and these good people certainly looked upon the comely youth with unbounded admiration. "Was he not fresh from Musr-el-Kahera, the great city?" Yes; and I suppose, indeed, there is a pride of town lads over country folk in other lands besides Egypt.

Saïd leaped out as we hit the shore, and hammered the stake into the yielding bank, catching a rope thrown to him to loop on it. We made fast in a little wooded nook, a sling's cast above Sowadee, and there prepared to lay by for the night. Fortune befriended the lad even here, for we had no sooner arrived than he got invited

shout the usual "Backsheesh," a word he knew we could not abide, when he fell upon them and drove them into the recesses of the wood. Having scattered the troop, he sauntered into the village hard by, where, as was his wont, he began to reconnoitre and thrust himself into everybody's privacy as if the realms of the Sultan were his own. Here, chancing to hit upon a rustic bridal party preparing for the festival, he confided to them, with a great deal of bounce, that he, Saïd, was attached to the suite of three mighty infidel pashas journeying to the Cataracts, who had letters for the Pasha of Upper Egypt (which was fact), had charge of some grand embassy (which was fable), and who were otherwise very big people. He came in while we were at dinner full of all this (barring the bounce, which we learnt afterwards), and told us that the bridegroom "prayed peace might alight on our path, and would we honour his humble feast with our august presence?" After that Saïd added a modest request of his own, and then we sent him away.

The sun went down ere we had finished dinner; we saw it from our little cabin burning through the palms on the opposite coast. Our sailors were taking their meal *al fresco* on the bank under the trees: they were unusually noisy about it, too. It was a red-letter day in their calendar. They had somehow become possessed of a sheep's head, and the thing had been boiled in their broth; hence the excitement. I had noticed Selim

parloining some young leeks and other vegetables earlier in the day from a plantation we had passed; he cut them up before tracking, and flung them into the pot with

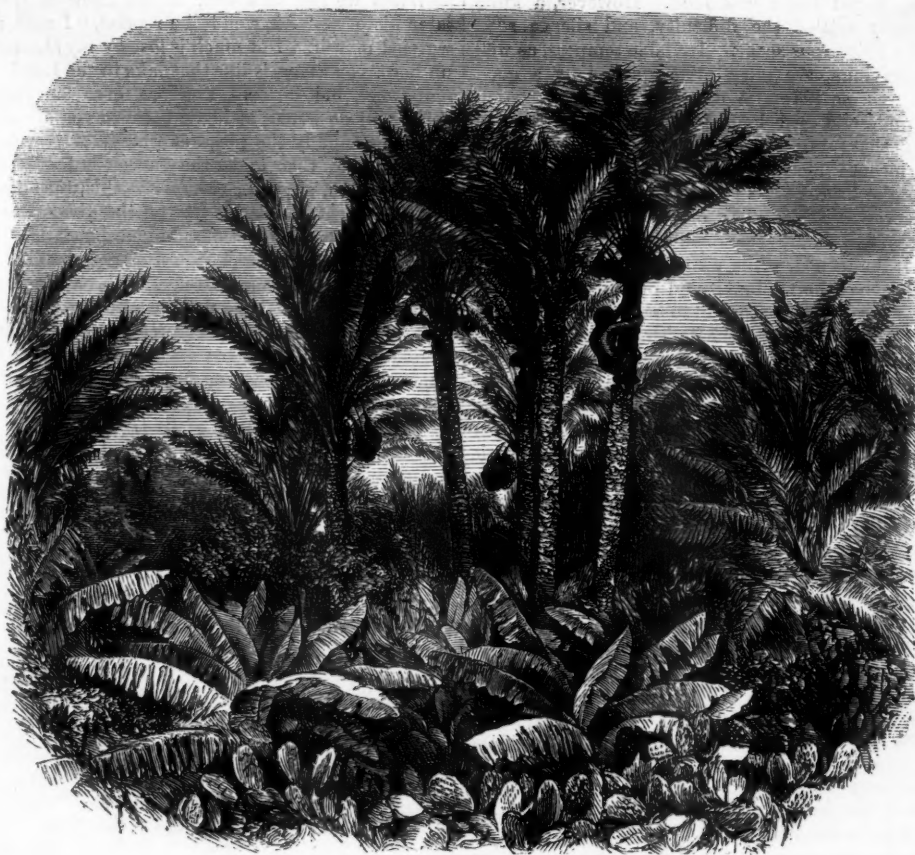
two by way of savour, and some coarse bread crumbled into the mess to thicken it. This was daily boiled up in a big iron pot over a fire on a kind of tripod by the



WATER-WHEEL ON THE RIVER-BANK.

the mutton; and somehow, so it appeared, this mess had been ill managed.

mast. I used to watch the sailors' cook poking at the fire and stirring away most diligently by the hour



NILE VEGETATION.

The sailors' meal was usually prepared after the following simple fashion: a broth of red lentils, a leek or

together. Then, after much seething, the thick mess was baled out into the pan, and cookery served it up.

This was not our one-eyed Nubian, but a lad the sailors had brought from Cairo—a chubby-faced urchin a little taller than the pot he was perpetually stirring, who wore an apron to his knees, and usually begrimed himself to the roots of his hair, so effectually at times that he got many a cuff for it, and, indeed, was once pitched bodily into the river to cleanse himself. This was the young gentleman who, at the right hour every evening, baled out the well-stirred mess into a huge pan and set it forth in a clear space on deck.

"Bismilleh, Allah be praised!" the urchin would cry; "dinner is ready!" "Allah be praised!" was echoed by one and another of the hungry crew as they gathered up from here and there, and dressed themselves on their haunches around the festive pan. The meal was hot and smoking—a mess of pottage, very similar, I suppose, to that Esau sold to his brother Jacob—and each, in turn, the bismilleh said, would (with due regard to his fingers) dip his fist into the dish, and feed himself by handfuls at a time.

Such was the usual course of things as happening each sunset; but now, as I have intimated, there was disorder at the repast. A sheep's head was in question, a succulent and savoury morsel of mutton! A mountain of meat, swelling gently out of the rosy swamps of lentil pottage surrounding it in the pan. How delicious the very odour of so dainty a dish! How provoking to the appetite! But, somehow, wretched little chubby-face had forgotten to divide the joint; thus it was difficult to begin—difficult because of the bone—and so the murmuring raged fierce and loud. However, a knife and a chopper settled the difficulty, and silence soon fell over the boisterous scene. Irritable tempers, as well as inner cravings, are often alike quelled by a good meal. It was so here. A deep sigh of satisfaction passed round, and ere long I saw copious clouds of smoke from that calumet of peace, the goosah, wreathing aloft as incense among the palm-fronds over head, where now the bright stars shone through.

It was seven o'clock. The old year was fast dying; nevertheless five hours remained to us. What should we do? It happened, while we were thus debating by candle-light, that the mellow sound of voices, as from a chorus far away, came floating in to us through the open passage. "What's that?" cried Smith, as he lazily poked the end of a long chibouke across from his lounge on the divan into the candle to re-light his tobacco; "is it a boat?" The caliph at that moment, pushing back the thick curtain, showed his important face at the door. "Traveller, his boat, sir, walking down river; too dark to see flag. Him hang blue light to his mast." We got our guns ready for saluting, and mounted on the upper deck. It was one of those nights you never see but in the East. The broad face of the river lay stilled as in deep slumber, still—without a ripple. Each single star from the firmament above mirrored itself distinctly in that sea of glass. You almost feared to look down into the awful abysses of that second hemisphere, high over which you felt yourself to be floating as in some airy ocean. I had never seen so perfect an illusion before, nor do I believe any other river or lake could show it but the Nile. Far away over the water, as yet, glowed a row of little lights from the cabin windows of the approaching dahabeeyah. We could hear the dip of their oars in the intervals of the boatmen's song. As for the ship, a shadowy mass, it loomed bigger and bigger on the stream, until the Arab oarsmen—twelve in rank—rowing and singing with all their might, took indistinct shape in the flickering light of a little lantern hung above them.

Bang! Bang! Six shots in quick succession went pealing across the water, and the sound came back to us in echo from the Libyan hills. There was a momentary lull. We saw the Arabs resting on their oars. The dark mass came floating nearer and nearer, and the reflected window-lights showed already athwart our bows. We could perceive a stir on board—then a flash. Our salute was returned. The ship's course now changed. It was evident that an order had been given to pull in for shore.

The meeting of friends or countrymen is quite an event on the Nile. It is about the only break in your journey which reminds you of nationality or home. Thus, when we presented ourselves on board the newly-arrived craft, and found its owner to be an Englishman, and, more, an acquaintance of our Professor's, we fraternized as they only do who meet thus in far distant lands. Our host, Mr. Doubledash—a man well known in scientific circles and conversaziones, where he shone as a great light, and where he had gone through many a stiff tussle with the Professor—had started early this season for the Cataracts. But, finding, as he expressed it, things rather dull, he determined to make the best of his way back, and get across the long desert into Palestine, taking Petra (if the fates, or rather, Bedouins, were propitious) in his track. "I rejoice to have fallen on with you," he said, when we were duly installed in his divans, and a Nubian boy had handed the inevitable coffee and chiboukes; "I was so anxious for a chat about home news. Have you any papers?"

When we had run over all we knew of the world's later history—"Ah, well!" he replied, "I need not have worried myself. Not much is lost by my absence. Life up here, you know, is like that lake in the Land of Roses, half-sweet, half-bitter. You are ever fancying something will go wrong at home because you are away, and thus you muddy the pleasant waters of travel. But it doesn't; and that takes the conceit out of you. May I entreat you, sir, to be careful?"—this was addressed to Smith, who, swinging his legs off the divan, was kicking unconcernedly at something hidden beneath—"there is a mummy under there."

"A mummy!" ejaculated Smith, springing up in horror; "I hope I have not hurt him!"

"No, I think not; he is pretty tough. There are a couple more on deck, too—women, in boxes: but this fellow is unrolled. If you will lend a hand, we will have him out."

Whereupon, while one of us held a pair of candles, the Thing in question was dragged from beneath the divan and laid on the table. It was the perfect body of a man mummified in youth, stiff and unyielding, as if accumulated ages had hardened it into iron. Every sinuous line of muscle and ligament flanking the rigid limbs could still be traced. The brown face had become distorted into a sinister grin, half exposing the upper teeth; while folds of thick clustering hair matted with bitumen wreathed about the brow.

"I bought him at Thebes," said Mr. Doubledash, pulling off some threads of mummy cloth, which still adhered to the body. "Mustapha Aga hit upon a fresh tomb while I was there, and he took me to see it: I purchased the three tenants *in situ*. It was quite a speculation, you know. 'They might happen to turn out well or they might not,' Mustapha told me. So I took my chance. The outer coffins were magnificent," continued our friend enthusiastically. "As big as that table, and crowded as thick with paintings as the walls of the Academy. But I left them behind me, for I hadn't room. Even as it is," he added, with a sigh, "my Arabs

are always stumbling over the women up-stairs, and wanting to burn them. They are very good for making fires, they say."

"Did you find anything in them?" the Professor asked.

"No; merely a scarabæus or two knotted to a net of beads over the breast, and a ring; but no jewels. As for the ladies, they are not yet thoroughly unrolled, for I wanted to save them for England. In fact, I broke off the head of one in tearing away her painted mask, and trying to unclasp a necklace she had on. I fancy the head had been hurt by the embalmers. There it is behind you, sir, on the shelf."

This last was addressed to Smith, who, taken in flank, and now thoroughly horrified, turned sharp round to look; and there, truly enough, propped up by a powder-flask, stood the ghastly thing grinning hideously at him! "I think," stammered Smith, "I should like, if you will excuse it, to go on to your upper deck and look at those—those unrolled mummies."

"With pleasure," rejoined our friend. "Let us adjourn. May I trouble you to hold the candles?" And so we stepped up the little stair, and in the dark night turned over those ancient relics of humanity, pulled them out of their inner coffins, set them upright on their feet, talked scientifically over them, and then laid them back again to rest. Nor let the reader suppose that more serious thoughts were absent, though the words spoken at the time did not express them. Altogether it was a weird scene on that upper deck. The two Arab bands, fraternizing, had kindled a watch-fire of doura straw on the shore, and were sitting around it carousing under the palms. The blaze, now waxing, now waning, mantled on their wild and dusky features, and scattered strange, elf-like shadows over the jagged palm-trunks which stood from the gloom. And further, as every tongue of flame shot aloft, its reflection glared across the water, and as it flickered upon this grim group of philosophers and mummies, animated it with a false and ghostly life, and lent to it the look of a solemn conclave holding council with the dead.

But the night was fast wearing on. What of the waning year? What of the marriage feast? Our friend from the upper country had surely fallen upon prosperous days. Here were two entertainments awaiting him in one night. "Would he join us in these festivities?" we asked. Good: then it would be well to hasten at once to the village.

The two dragomans and Saïd, each bearing a lantern, lighted us across the plank to the shore, and led a way through the thick copse to the village. It was not far. We could see a glimmering light through the trees, and the sound of music and dancing came borne to us on the night wind. Haroun was grumbling all the way.

"What for you, sare, go village wedding? Grand wedding in Cairo—*fantasia*, fine dress, fine dancer, fine music! Here no fine at all. Village wedding, common people, no good. Bad dancer, bad music, bad everything. Ya!" And the good fellow found that words were lacking him wherein to express his contempt.

Many of the Nile villages, as I have said, are made up of square, mud-built dwellings, clustered together, with a few open spaces between, in which a straggling palm or two from the encompassing grove, or a broad-spreading sycamore, affords friendly shelter from the noonday heats. In one of these spaces the festival in question was being held. Some fifty or sixty—the whole population of Sowadee, in fact, men, women, and children—were gathered to the feast.

We penetrated by a labyrinth of tortuous passages and courts. The people were scattered—some lounging

on the mud-divans round the sycamore roots, some squatting in circle by a half-extinct watch-fire, some chatting, smoking, lying prone in the dust, with heels kicking up in the air. The twilight of stars, the stray glow of a goozeh, and our lanterns, were our only help; for a low cresset, set up near the dancers, cast its light only on them, and on the spectators gathered around. Of course, the focus of attraction was the bridegroom's dwelling. He owned a house about three times as big as a sentry-box. It was one of several off-shoots from a larger mansion, belonging to the sheik of the village—a very grand palace indeed, which boasted of an upper storey, and was almost as tall as the adjoining mosque, whose minaret, erect as a javelin, grew up into the dark night, dim against a background of stars.

The friends of the bridegroom and the bride (men and women), dimly distinguished by the fitful light, were seated in the position of honour about his door on divans of wicker-work of palm. The bridegroom was standing in his doorway, but the lady lingered inside unseen. A carpet had been spread in front for the dancers, a little oil lamp or two stood on the ground, and a cresset, stuck in the earth hard by, was burning. A boy fed it continually by poking bits of doura straw through the bars. The spectators had ranged themselves in circle for a good view of the performance.

Two women were dancing when we drew near, and the bridegroom—a fine-looking young fellow, dressed in a blue gown and scarlet turban—came instantly forward, and politely made room for us on the wicker divan among his friends. All these—the men, that is—saluted us by touching breast and turban, and crying: "Salaam! salaam!" while the women, trying to look demure, took courage from their numbers, and finally giggled uncontrollably at the fun of the thing. At first they made faint pretences of drawing their veils slantwise across the face so as to deprive us of a fair sight of their charms; but, seeing we were not to be provoked by such privation, and finding further that we were very tame, they let things take their course, and, with a show of dignity, turned their look on the dancers. A boy handed us coffee and pipes. Haroun, with clever forethought, had brought our own chiboukes; thus we were spared the smoking in common with our dusky brethren and sisters. The two dragomans and Saïd stood behind us, dressed in their most gorgeous attire—gold-embroidered vests, sumptuous silk scarfs of orange and crimson, and turbans which were masterpieces of the Damascus looms. No wonder the villagers—women and boys especially—looked upon them with unmitigated awe.

The dancing was resumed. Four or five musicians squatted themselves on the edge of the carpet, and, with cymbals, darabouka, double pipes, and a kind of violin, discoursed a wild music, which kept measure to the tread of the dancers' feet. Sometimes the thing was varied; sundry of the men and women on the divans broke out into a song—an epithalamium, I suppose—but dancing chiefly held sway. As for the dancers, the two best were professionals—hired almehs. But in the intervals of their dance the brideswomen came forward two by two, and took their places on the carpet. The almehs were rather pretty—dark-featured, gipsy-like girls, with big eyes pencilled with kohl; adown their backs a wild abundance of black hair, threaded with tiny gold coins, fell in a glittering shower. They wore a host of tawdry finery—earrings, bracelets, necklaces of beads, which tinkled as they danced. A gauzy tob, a spencer of crimson silk, trousers drooping and full—so full as almost to eclipse their naked feet on the carpets—completed their attire.

They kept time, fast or slow, with little brass cymbals looped over the thumb and forefinger, jerking them together with head cast back, and arms thrown aloft. Their manner of dancing was identical with that portrayed on the wall-pictures in the ancient tombs—doubtless the same as to character, if not, indeed, the exact movements of that dance whereby the fair Salome bewitched Herod and his captains in their revels.

Half an hour we stayed, spectators of this various entertainment—guests of the bridegroom. Our proud host gravely confided to us between his whiffs some interesting episodes in his courtship and marriage. Haroun interpreted them, of course, in his own racy way. They are too long to repeat, but the upshot led you to fancy that the newly-married pair was somewhat tempered with the mettle of the barber's wife, who courted her husband by casting date-stones at him from behind the wall, giggled, and ran away. We did not see the bride. An indistinct glimpse of drapery, and one or two female forms grouped in a dark corner of the sentry-box, was all that could be gained, and that only by a chance ray from the flickering cresset.

So we bade good-bye to the friendly circle, dropped a backsheesh into the bridegroom's willing hand, and quitted the scene in a blaze of fireworks—not metaphorical, but real. For Smith had brought a Roman candle or two and a big rocket with him, in order—as he expressed it—to astonish the natives; and, on leaving, he astonished them accordingly. Never, I will be bound to say, were works of art more keenly appreciated. Not even the famous Girandola, on that last great night of the Roman festival—fiery halls of unmitigated splendour, cloisters of amethyst, and emerald vistas of golden grandeur, which, as you know, are called forth in an instant, and finally blow up like a volcano—not even the Girandola, I say, elicits deeper gutturals of "Oh," and "Ah!" from the gaping, dragon-ridden crowd under the Pincian Hill, than came forth responsive from the rustics of Sowadee, spell-bound by that solitary rocket!

And the old year was fading out; the tide that never waits lay at its last ebb. Many such a tide had ebbed before—how many!—upon those ancient shores. We sat over a fire of sticks on the edge of the desert, under the glittering stars, and silently waited for the turn. It came, the new year. Alas for old Egypt! Another flood tide might set in, and still another, and another, but never could their waters render back those mighty landmarks which ages had fretted away and envious storm-waves swept into the abysses of the past. Ah, well, a few more ebbings and flowings, and perhaps the landmarks, not only of Egypt, but of Time itself, may be swept away—swept into the shoreless ocean of eternity!

THE EXPERIENCES OF A CHURCH PLATE.

II.

OUR collection was to be made at the door; and, as soon as ever the sermon was ended, the churchwarden caught me up, and moved thither with all speed. That churchwarden was quite a man of business; and I soon saw that he had good reason for making such haste, for already half a dozen people had managed to slip off without contributing anything to the good cause. They were lost to me beyond any hope of recovery; I wonder if they ever thought that they were losers themselves. They had escaped from me; but had they escaped from the eye which sees every one?

On reaching the door I found, according to the old

plate's words, that what had looked so like a sunbeam was in reality a figure; and that it now stood beside me. The pen was dipped in the golden inkhorn, the scroll was unrolled, and the recording angel prepared to write.

They were principally poor people near the door, so at first I received very little. Some rushed out rudely; a few gave pence and halfpence; and one old man gave a threepenny piece. Far the greatest number appeared to think that they had no concern with the collection whatsoever, although many of them were the parents of the children on whose behalf the sermon was just preached. "Well!" I thought to myself, "here is a strange thing—the minister troubling himself a great deal more about these people's children than they trouble about them themselves. Just to think how that good man has been working for these young ones, and their own parents don't put a farthing on the plate;" and I looked at one side to see whether the scribe that was attached to me had taken any notice of the matter. Indeed he had! the names of all who passed were written down; and there was something put opposite the parents' names that evidently meant something particular. It was just such a crooked kind of mark as one would make if one had to describe an ungrateful person by a mark. I can't tell what it was like in words; but it looked an ugly suspicious kind of thing, such as would not bear favour in the sight of God or man.

I wondered how parents could expect a blessing on the education of their children when they made so light of it themselves; but I said nothing, for the congregation were coming out fast and thick; and to attend to my proper business gave me as much as I could do.

Do not think, however, that all was dark. No, no; there was a penny that was saved during the week, by blowing out the candle, and rocking the baby by the light of the few embers on the hearth; and there was another that came from overtime at work; and another that had been specially earned for this occasion by making an extra cabbage-net. And that threepenny piece! I saw the figure by my side look hard at the threadbare man that put it in, and the pen flew rapidly over the scroll, and I could see that the writing was more as if it had been written with a sunbeam than anything else. Well it might; for that threadbare man had pinched himself hard to make up that little coin, and had offered it before the throne in heaven, ere he cast it into the plate on earth. The old man's granddaughter was at the school; and, now that he was losing his sight, she read to him out of the Bible—out of the Bible that she was taught at school; and as she read with the voice of her dead mother—the old man's only child—he thought the sweet words were whispered to him from another world; and then he saw, far, far away beyond stars, and clouds, and all that meets the mortal eye—far, far away into the golden city where friends separate no more—and how could he receive all this blessing through the school and not give all he could to show his gratitude in deeds?

But the poor people were soon gone. I ought to have had at least sixty coins, for sixty of them passed me by; but, when the last went out, I had only collected one shilling and threepence: and the threepenny piece was a fifth of the sum.

I was sorry that these poor people should thus hinder their own blessing by ingratitude and selfishness; and that they should deny themselves the luxury of giving—a luxury within every man's reach—even if he have ever so little to give: but the loss was theirs, not mine; and

now that the last of them had gone, I said to myself, "Better times are coming; I shall soon have what I have been looking forward to with so much pleasure."

I was next approached by a gentleman who looked comfortable, and who was comfortable, as far, at least, as his body was concerned. I expected a sovereign from him. If the churchwarden had not held me so tightly in his hand, I almost felt as though I should have gone half way to meet him. He was a man right well to do; he had no family to support; he had more than he knew what to do with. He approached me, he put out his hand, and dropped a shilling into my lap. That shilling fell upon me like a piece of ice, and would have given me cold, had I been subject to human maladies. And why?—not from the mere fact of a shilling being a small sum in itself, for I have often felt one as good as a cordial coming from those from whom it was a substantial gift. No!

I shuddered, because I heard the churchwarden mutter in the very inmost recesses of his heart, "Selfish man! and you'll go home and drink a seven-and-sixpenny bottle of port at your dinner; 'one shilling' only to help to bring up all these poor children, and 'seven and sixpence' on your own throat." I saw the white figure calmly make its note upon the scroll, and the selfish man passed out.

"Is it possible," said I to myself, "that a man can be found to spend seven times as much upon his own throat at one meal as he gives after such an appeal to the cause of God?" But it was possible! That shilling had been given because it was less annoying to give than to be remarked for not giving; had it taken away one glass from the bottle of port, it would never have been given at all; even here "self" was the ruling thought. "When," thought I, "will people know that they do not hold their possessions only for themselves?—when will they learn that selfishness is a curse? Surely," said I to myself, "every time he swallows a glass of that seven-and-sixpenny port to-night, he'll be mocking the One into whose sanctuary he has cast that miserable shilling to-day."

The figure by my side could evidently read my thoughts, for it said, in a low voice, "'Self' is a mocker of the Lord."

That was an awful sentence, short as it was; and I should probably have pondered long upon its fearfulness; but there was no time, for on came, almost treading on this man's heels, another gentleman. This man I also scanned closely as he approached me, and from the brief survey which I was able to take of him, I put him down for a sovereign, or half a sovereign at the least. But I was disappointed; he also put down a shilling, and passed on. My thoughts crowded in upon me so fast, that I felt, and indeed said to myself, a great deal in a very short space of time. "What," said I to myself, "another shilling? Am I never to rise above shillings? Is this a holy cause?—and are all holy causes worth no more to any man than a shilling? Why has this man only given a shilling?"

I had scarcely asked myself the question, before I received an answer. The figure by my side made a mark in the scroll, and simply uttered the words, "The thoughtless man;" and I knew all about the matter. The man who had just passed me never thought a bit about the sermon, or about the wants of other people, or whether they had any wants at all. Perhaps he might have given more, if he had thought, for he was not a stingy man; but what good was that? He did not do his duty now; the charity suffered; and I am sure, by the mark I saw the angel putting down, that he must have suffered himself. Several of this class passed on

with a shilling, and some even with more; but their money, so far as true charity goes, was no more than so much dust; they neither *meant* to do good, nor *cared* to do good; and it was quite plain that their thoughts had a good deal to do with the marks which were set down opposite their names. "Oh," thought I to myself, "these coins are only so many representatives of sin. If only these people could remember how the One above has thought of them—given them this money—given for them that which is above all price—surely they would never insult him, by taking no thought for his interest and cause?"

The figure by my side said, "The same thoughtlessness is ruining their souls;" and in the deep solemnity of that thought (for I had heard the preacher in the sermon describe something of what it was to lose the soul) I forgot all about the paltry shillings.

The next comer at first greatly revived my spirits. On he came, and dropped a sovereign into my lap. "This," thought I, "is as it should be; now, at length, I am really going to work." I was inclined to look at the donor with pleasure, if not with admiration; and I was about to say to myself, "Surely the blessing of all these children, and this good cause, will light on him," when, to my surprise, I perceived that he had the same vacant look as the thoughtless man who had given only a shilling; and, moreover, I saw the angel put the very same mark opposite his name.

I ventured, not exactly to remonstrate, but to say in an inquiring and puzzled tone of voice, "Has not this man just given a piece of gold—the only piece I have as yet?" But he answered, "We never err: mark his face—you will see he meant nothing when he gave gold—no more than the other did when he gave silver. Sovereigns and shillings sometimes only say the same thing."

Then I remembered what the minister had said about a man's giving "according to his ability," and it was plain that this one had not done so; he thought no more about £1 than the other did about one shilling; and, in fact, looking at matters deep down in their realities, he might be said to have given nothing at all. I wondered whether people often thought how much sin there is in thoughtlessness, and how much loss to God's cause. In these cases there certainly was such loss; for, had these two men really thought, he who gave a shilling would have given £1, and he who gave the £1 would have put in a note for £10; for they could well afford these respective sums; and neither of them was peculiarly selfish or mean. They were thoughtless—that was all; but this thoughtlessness was alike bad for the charity and themselves.

Bad as these cases undoubtedly were, they were not, however, so bad as some which now came under my notice. These persons were the "Artful Dodgers" of the congregation. I am sorry to say, I have met with them in every collection I have made, since this memorable day of which I am now speaking, when I commenced my career as a collecting plate; but, as you may judge, I was greatly surprised and very indignant when I first met them. Being so large and common a class, no wonder that I came into contact with them the first time I appeared in public. I could not make out at first what they were at.

One man, whom I saw looking about him in all directions during service, now came by me looking straight before him, with his eyes as fixed as if they were made of glass. I saw him fix them just three steps away from me; and after he had passed me only two steps, I saw his head turn about just as well as ever; and, in one of the turns, I saw that his eyes were all right again.

At first I thought the poor man might have been struck by a sudden draught from the open doors, and got a crick in his neck, and, though I lost his contribution, I pitied his misfortune; but I saw my companion mark him with one of those fatal marks, and this set me thinking. "Why," said I to myself, "is this?" Then the thought rushed all round me, "Nothing is the matter with him at all. There are none so blind as those who won't see; it was just a trick to get out free;" and I was thankful to think that the fact of his fixing his head that way, and not venturing to look me straight in the face, was a sign that he had some measure at least of shame, and I hoped that, some day, even that might prevail to make him do what was right. Ever since that day, I know these men by the name "Blinkers," for they seemed to me to be very like horses with blinkers to each eye, to make them look straight before them.

But I soon found out that in this, as in all other classes, there existed a considerable variety. These Blinkers did not all go out looking straight before them. Some kept so close to the people in front of them that they slipped by almost unobserved; and one cunning fellow pretended to drop and catch at his umbrella, and he was off and past me in the very act. But it would be wearisome were I to catalogue the arts, devices, and dodges of this class. They used their handkerchiefs, just as if they had violent colds, at the critical moment of passing me; they were so busy buttoning up their coats, or tucking up their dresses, that they were quite preoccupied—just as if it were to this, and not to unwillingness to give, must be attributed their passing me by. I should often be amused at these petty, mean arts, if I were not sad, and did I not see those ill-savoured marks continually recorded after their names. I have heard of small cheating going on in the world, but here, surely, was small cheating going on in the church: and I shall not pursue the subject any further.

I shall only put on record the fact that there are some Blinkers who form a variety of the class, and are called "Bowers" or "Bobbers." These people show no manner of shame, and herein they differ from the others, who, by their cunning little arts, wish it to be thought that it isn't altogether because they won't give, that they don't give.

There are people who have the assurance coolly to bow or curtsy to the plate, and then pass out. I remember well one old lady of this kind, who was the pink and perfection of good manners. As she passed me by, she did not content herself with a mere familiar nod of the head; she held out her dress at each side, and gave me a grand salute; and, when her hands were thus employed, how could they be giving anything in the plate? But this woman met one day with a rebuke which effectually cured her. She was a Scotchwoman, and lived at a boarding-house near the church, where there was another old Scotch lady also.

Now the Scotch are what is called in the world "canny;" but I have found as liberal hands and as warm hearts among the Scotch as amongst any people in the world. Miss Macfarlane was one of those liberal, warm-hearted souls, and it stirred her indignation greatly that Mrs. Mull should go out Sunday after Sunday in this way. At last, she said to herself, "I'll speak—I'm determined I will—if she passes next Sunday." Well, next Sunday came, and Mrs. Mull passed me by with a grand salute. But Miss Macfarlane had watched her; and told at the dinner-table the story of a titled Scotch lady who used always to pass the plate, till the elder on duty at the church-door went after her, and,

before all the people, called out, "Leddy Betty, maer o' yer siller, and less o' yer manners!"

That story was as good as a sermon to Mrs. Mull; for whether she saw the absurdity of paying a hollow compliment to the plate, or whether she was really ashamed of herself, I cannot tell; but so it was, that she never passed me by any more.

But to return to my first collection: before I make mention of any more of my sad experiences on that memorable day, I have something pleasant to record. I think it my bounden duty to say that I met with these sad people of whom I have just now spoken, and I am sorry to say I have not done with them yet; but I had gleams of sunshine, too—yes! and more than gleams—I had bright beams, which seemed to come straight down upon me and make me feel warm and bright, which I am sure is the way that a church plate ought always to feel.

A whole shower of these Bobbers were passing me, when I saw a few paces off a rather tall man, with plenty of dark whiskers; and on his arm was leaning a little woman, I will not say altogether fat, but comfortable-looking, with a fur boa round her neck, and stuffed into her mouth, for she was very wheezy in the winter; and with them was their own boy. The father's name was John, and the boy was known as "Jack," that being John in a familiar sort of way. Jack was an only son, and was a very polite, prudent, steady little boy. You could have found out all about his earliest history in the first page of the family Bible; for there his fond mother not only wrote down the date of his birth, but when he had the measles, and other important events. And now she was training up little Jack to be, like herself, liberal, and loving, and warm-hearted—a friend to every charity, and a lover of everything good.

Mrs. Beacher would not have been at church this day, for she was still wheezy from the bronchitis, but that it was a collection day; and this, which was the reason that many stayed at home, or slipped off to neighbouring churches, was the very one why she came out. She was prepared not only to stuff that boa into her mouth, but even down her throat, if necessary, rather than not be in her place on a collection Sunday, if possible at all. True, she could have sent her contribution by her husband or little Jack; but that would not do for her. "Every empty seat," said she, "is a discouragement to the minister, and every one in his place helps to hearten him up, so I'll go to-day; I managed to go out to dinner without any harm yesterday, and why should I not go to church to-day?"

Although you could not see any more of Mrs. Beacher than her eyes, the boa having apparently eaten up all the rest of her face, still those eyes were quite enough for me. People talk of beautiful eyes, and this colour and that; but give me the eyes that are beautiful with love and goodness, and that talk good things in every glance. What did it matter that the boa coiled itself around this good woman's mouth?—the eyes were able to do all the talking, and they said to me, "Now you're going to get something; and you shall have it with all our hearts."

Don't think, my friends, that these worthy people were rich, for they were not: they were just comfortably off; there were plenty of people in the congregation who could have bought and sold them over and over again.

As the gentleman came up to me, I saw him extend his hand, and immediately I felt something fall as gently as a snow-flake into my lap. But, unlike a snow-flake, it was warm and balmy, and as soon as it touched me, a delicious warm thrill passed all round me, the like of

which I had never felt before. Then the stout little woman with the beaming eyes dropped in two sovereigns, and the only son put in a shilling.

I saw my companion marking his scroll with what I knew to be happy signs; and the reason was plain enough. This £10 cheque was the fruit of thought, and the fruit of self-discipline; for the donor would not by mere nature have given so much: it was the fruit of a warm heart to what was good, and therefore it was of price. And the bright-eyed little woman! She had thought of how discouraged the minister often was at being left to find where he best could the means for carrying on his good works, and she felt it was a great thing, as she said, "to hearten him up," and she did her best to bring about this desirable result; for she encouraged her husband to give, and she gave herself, and she taught Jack to give; and, to tell the truth, the contribution of this one little family made up full one-third of the collection.

It might seem strange that so much should have been made of Jack's shilling, seeing that so many shillings have been spoken of with reproach; but there is a reason for this—it was his own, saved out of his pocket-money, and therefore real charity. I often think that parents are very much to blame for the want of charitable feeling in their children as they grow up. They give them generally a threepenny, or the smallest silver coin they can find, to put on the plate; and so the child grows up (1) with the habit of giving the least coin possible, and (2) without any interest in the matter, for even that is not his own, and (3) he takes, and can take, no interest in what is going on when the whole thing is such a form to him. Jack Beacher was taught to give out of his own money—always to put by a part for doing good; and this he did with a willing mind.

As we have said, Mrs. Beacher was greatly impressed with the importance of "heartening up her minister;" she was far too wheezy to do much in the district, her good man was at his professional duties all day, and Jack was at school; still this worthy family did strengthen the minister's hands, for he knew he could always calculate upon them to help in doing good. Believe me, it is a great thing for a minister to have dependable people in his congregation—folk that he can always expect to see in their places, just as surely as he sees the church pillars which keep up the roof; they're worth a good deal in themselves, over and above anything that they may put into the plate, and their cheerful faces help him just as much as their ready hands. I have had as many wry faces made at me as if I had been a black draught; but the Beacher people, and such as they, always had a smile for me, and I think the figure by my side must have made much of their offerings, for I saw a sweet smile beam for a moment on that placid face, as these—the first liberal folk I met with on that day—dropped in their offerings, and passed out.

I say that smile was for a moment, for it passed rapidly away; and good reason, alas! it had so to do, for I was now approached by one whom I can only describe as "a very great hypocrite." This woman had been nodding her head with approbation all the time the minister was preaching, but especially during that part of the sermon in which he was pleading so earnestly for the children. No one could have seen her without expecting a substantial donation at the door. She was also one of the loudest singers of the hymn.

An indescribable thrill, however, which passed through me, gave me immediately to understand that I must make up my mind to be disappointed, and a glance at my companion's face confirmed me in my apprehension.

Judging from appearances, this lady could have very well afforded to give; but she passed out without putting a fraction on the plate. Not even a sixpence for decency's sake did she bestow. It was not the churchwarden's fault, however. This gentleman was a very experienced collector, and occasionally shook me a little, so that I made all the little fourpennies and sixpences jump, by way of reminding such as were forgetful that there was such a thing as a plate at the door. I was never so shaken, however, as when this lady approached me. The fact is, the churchwarden knew her well. It was only about two months before, when a sermon for the Missionary Society had been preached, and a hymn was being sung, while the plate went round from pew to pew (which was sometimes the case in our church), that it reached this very individual, just as she was singing out with all her might—

"Fly abroad, thou glorious gospel."

The churchwarden was determined not to let her off, so he kept poking the plate in front of her, while she on her part kept singing out, "Fly abroad"—"fly abroad!" but, ah! she gave nothing to help it to fly. And now she served me the same way. Alas! poor hypocrite, I wonder if she thought at all of the absurdity of singing one thing and acting another; and how what she sang and what she did, or rather what she did not do, will square together hereafter. But there are many such as she. She was only one of a class who flatter with their mouths, but are untrue in their hearts. Perhaps she thought she had done her part by joining in the hymn, and nodding her head during the sermon; but it would have taken a great deal of this work to have paid off the debt on the schools. She passed out, and I fancied that the mark opposite her name was almost more crooked than any of the rest.

My next visitor, however, made me feel more comfortable; for, as I have already said, gleams of sunshine do fall on collecting plates, even though they be comparatively few and far between.

The individual who now approached me was a tradesman in the neighbourhood—a tradesman he was, and a tradesman he wished to be thought. When this man entered upon business, he made up his mind always to lay by the tenths of his profits for doing good; and he found a blessing in doing so. Never was Mr. Clements without something in his charity-bag from which to draw; and, whatever benevolent claims were made upon him, he had wherewith to meet them. Indeed, he was sometimes surprised himself, when he came to put together all he had given in the twelvemonths; and, instead of feeling it was *too* much, he rejoiced it was *so* much. "After all," said he, "what is it but a tenth part of what has been given to me? I must bless others, even as I have been blessed myself." Happy man! he had always a kind of spring about him at his work; he knew he was working for others as well as for himself, and this gave him an elasticity which enabled him, I verily believe, to do much more than he otherwise could have done; and so, according to the great law, he found that "watering others, he was watered also himself." I liked the look of the mark that was put opposite his name, and I fancied that the figure with the scroll looked at him as though he knew all about him; and that there was no doubt how he would act. "It is a fine thing," said I to myself, "to act on principle—that's what does the work in the long run."

But I must hurry on. If I were to say all I thought, as well as all I saw, I should, I fear, wear out the patience of my friends, seeing that my theme is, alas! for the most part sad.

One lady passed me, and said "she was very sorry, she forgot it was a charity sermon, and would give in the evening." When the evening came, "she was very sorry, again; but she had forgotten her purse!"

Another passed me who had "really nothing to give." That was a fact—but why? Because she had spent all upon herself. She carried the education of fifty poor children on her back, to say nothing of what was on her head. Alas! alas! I saw the fatal marks put opposite her name.

I saw another marked who put on a sixpence. He was marked for very *meanness*; that was his crime, and I thought, "Surely the meanest of all meannesses is that which deals so meanly with the bounteous and generous One, who is so grand and noble in his dealings with the children of men."

One daring fellow, who added daring to his meanness, put on a bad coin, which he did not know how to get rid of in any other way. As if he could impose on the One to whom everything is known! That coin truly bore the image and superscription of the evil one, and I should not have been surprised if the churchwarden had taken a hammer and nailed it on his back.

I was passed by one grumbler, who complained that there were "so many calls," though there were only twelve charity sermons in the year, which, at a shilling a time (supposing he had given even that), would have only been twelve shillings a year. And yet this very man was always making calls himself, praying for his child to be made well, and his ships to be preserved at sea, and thieves to be kept from his warehouse, and all sorts of things. Poor creature! he would take all and give none.

But I must come to an end. I have plenty more to tell, but this is enough for one time. Oilstone and his party came on in due time. He gave a sovereign, for the churchwarden knew him, and he was afraid he would talk if he put on only a shilling; and the sweet, pale-faced girl dropped in a new bank-note for £5—being one half of her birthday present, which she had received the day before; and the footman in the red plush looked knowingly at me, as much as to say, "Well, my friend, how are you getting on?" I wish he had given something; but I found that servants generally think they need not give, and he seemed to think that carrying the prayer-books in a blue bag after his master and mistress was religion enough for him. "And yet," thought I, "servants have the privilege of serving and pleasing their great Master, and being rewarded by him as well as others."

My after life was more or less a repetition of this day. I have had sunshine and gloom, smiles and frowns. I shall go on at my work until the day comes for all accounts to be made up. Then I believe I shall have a voice to speak and witness concerning all I saw for good or evil, weal or woe. And I shall see some who made to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and some who shall experience throughout eternity those fearful words which I heard the minister read that day: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." Thus shall it be said to many a rich man; and to many a poor one with but one talent (*but that one unused*) shall come these awful words: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Varieties.

SALMON FISHERIES AND MILL-WEIRS.—Mr. Frank Buckland, one of the highest authorities in all matters of water-culture, affirms that mill-owners are at present the chief hinderers of abundant produce of salmon in our rivers. The Thames has 360 weirs upon it. The Severn has 73 weirs. Take the value of these 73 weirs, as mere water-power for mills, at £50 each, or £3650 in all, the mill-owners prevent the production of at least ten times that value of food in the shape of salmon. Mr. Buckland, in his valuable periodical, "Land and Water," maintains that the Special Commissioners (under the Salmon Fisheries Act of 1865) should be authorised to inspect mill-weirs, and to compel the erection of proper salmon-ladders (as explained in the "Leisure Hour" for February), or otherwise to remedy the existing evil. We are glad to hear that Mr. Buckland has been appointed one of the Inspectors of Salmon Fisheries.

CAWNPORE MEMORIAL.—The Inscription on the Cawnpore Memorial, which has been ascribed to Lord Canning ("Cawnpore," by G. O. Trevelyan), was written by Col. H. Yule, R.E. An engraving from a photograph was given in the "Sunday at Home" for December 1864.

AMERICAN PENSIONERS.—The entire number of pensioners, June 30, 1866, was 126,722. It is estimated that 33,000,000 dollars will be required to meet the exigencies of this branch of the service during the next fiscal year.

DISCHARGED PRISONERS.—Discharged prisoners, who have never perhaps turned their hands to honest employment, cannot be expected, even though possessing some education, to forsake the career of crime in which they have lived and revelled, unless they have learned industrious habits in gaol, unless they have motives and principles for honest living, unless they have some handicraft, trade, or pursuit which will supply them with the means of support.—*Rev. W. C. Osborn, Chaplain of Bath Gaol.*

NIGHTINGALES.—An adept told me "that at one time he rented a cottage, for which he paid £10 a year. If there was a good nightingale season, he made more than enough to pay his rent. In one season he caught fifteen dozen birds, and they brought him 18s. per dozen in London; also that he once caught nineteen nightingales before breakfast in the grounds of one gentleman, for which I told him he ought to have been transported." Yet there are still many copses near London where the wondrous song of the nightingale may be heard through the summer evenings.—*Harting's Birds of Middlesex.*

AMERICAN BOOK TRADE.—Webster's spelling-books are printed in large quantities in London for the American market. The book trade in the United States is struggling against protected paper, protected cloth, protected leather, protected thread, and protected types. The only thing wanting now to destroy it entirely is a tariff on books sufficiently high to put them out of the reach of common people. That done, the fool's paradise would not be far off.—*Chicago Tribune.*

HINDOO ABSTINENCE FROM ANIMAL FOOD.—In the new edition of McCulloch's Geographical Dictionary (four vols., Longman & Co.), Mr. F. Martin, the editor, says:—"It is a popular but erroneous notion, that the Hindoos live almost entirely on a vegetable diet; such a fact would be inconsistent with the physical nature of man, who, in reality, is omnivorous. The most fastidious of the Hindoos in point of diet are great eaters of milk and butter; fish is also extensively used near all the sea coasts, and on the shores of the principal rivers; and none of the people of India hold this description of food as abominable, except the inhabitants of the remote interior, who have no means of procuring it. Even flesh, however capricious in the selection, is occasionally eaten by the greater portion of the Hindoo people, and it is the want of means rather than religious scruples that makes them refrain from it. In cases of urgent necessity even religion authorises any kind of food, and in the event of a famine a Brahmin may eat the limb of a dog." [We can hardly reconcile this with statements made during the late terrible famine in Orissa, where the people were dying for want of rice, while multitudes of sleek oxen roamed about untouched.]

Hoon's "Song of the Shirt" was begun and so far proceeded with under the title of "Tale of a Shirt," before the ludicrous equivocal struck the intense mind of the author! If perpetuated, it is easy to see how such a step might have jarred with the pathos and potent effect of this admirable appeal to every humane feeling.

W. JERDAN.